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**A BRIEF INSIGHT
INTO THE
BEAUTIFUL TEACHINGS
OF ISLAM**

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***NO DOUBT THIS LIFE IS AN EXAMINATION
WHICH NEEDS YOUR FULL CONSIDERATION
AS TO WHAT YOU WILL TAKE TO
YOUR FINAL DESTINATION
ONLY TRUE BELIEF AND GOOD DEEDS ARE
YOUR WAY TO SALVATION***

(Muhammad Sherif)

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Honorific phrases in this book

(the Exalted)	Used after the mention of God/Allah to express: Glorified and Exalted is He
(blessings and peace be upon him)	Blessings and peace be upon him; used after mention of the Prophet Muhammad

About the word 'Lord'

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is 'master' or 'ruler' and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: 'the lord of the mansion' or '*Lord* So-and-So' (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God - Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah - not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

About the word 'Allah'

Although the English word 'God' has often been used interchangeably in this book with the word Allah, there is a difference. 'Allah' is the word in Arabic that is translated as 'God'. However, 'Allah' has a much more precise meaning than 'God'. 'Allah' is not merely an Arabic term for the word 'god'. Instead, the root word of the word 'Allah' is *ilâh*, which means 'a god'. There are countless numbers of made-up 'gods', but only One True God whose name is Allah. The word 'Allah' literally means 'the worshipped'. Allah is, thus, the proper name for the **only Being that is worthy of worship**, the True Creator of the universe. By saying 'Allah', Muslims are, in essence, negating every other entity which people wrongfully worship. The name 'Allah' is how God Almighty has referred to Himself in the Qur'an¹, and how Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) also referred to Him. Therefore, in this work, the term 'Allah' will often be used in reference to this One and Only God, who is worthy of worship.

¹ The Qur'an is the sacred book or scripture revealed to Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him).

Introduction

Every prophet sent by Allah (*subhânahu wa Ta'âlâ* - Glorified and Exalted is He) was supported with a revealed book that was the basis of enlightenment for the people whom the prophet was sent to. Being a revelation from the Almighty, every book is widely distinguishable from the books of people in its characteristics.

The last of those books is the Holy Qur'an, which Allah Has promised to preserve from change. The sayings or traditions of Prophet Muhammad (*salla Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* - blessings and peace be upon him) are the second source of Islamic teachings. They add to and detail the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

This booklet sheds light on the basic characteristics of those main two sources of Islamic teachings. Also included is a discussion on the Islamic moral system.

Islam has unique moral teachings. They call towards the strengthening of the relationship between humans and their Lord, as well as with one another. They also call for people to

correct and straighten themselves, both inwardly and outwardly. This booklet will shed light on some of its main aspects.

It should be noted that these moral teachings are those which were revealed from Allah. They are not a result of humanitarian work or experiences.

Enjoy the book.

Kind regards

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Main Aspects of the Islamic Moral System

Islam has unique moral teachings. These teachings call for strengthening the relationship between humans and their Lord, as well as with one another. They also call for people to correct and straighten themselves, both inwardly and outwardly.

Relation with the Lord

In the Qur'an, Allah calls people to correct and strengthen their relationship with Him and draw close to Him through spiritual and physical acts of worship, such as prayer, *Hajj*², supplication, and charity. In addition, the Qur'an calls us to seek knowledge about Allah through His names and attributes. This instils fear and awe of the Lord in people's hearts and establishes discipline in applying Allah's commands and prohibitions.

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) also instructed people to remember Allah at all times and in every situation. This creates a permanent connection between people and their Lord and instils stability, strength and tranquillity in

² Wherever possible, Arabic terms have been translated into English. In cases where we have chosen to retain the Arabic, the transliterated word or phrase is shown in italics the first time it appears in the text; the term is also defined in the glossary found at the end of this book. (Editor)

their hearts. It is one of the means of protecting against evil and vice, since a Muslim will be reminded constantly that Allah is watching his or her every action. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him), for example, instructed for specific invocations to be uttered at the time of sleep, before entering the lavatory, before sexual intercourse, while travelling, when in fear, upon entering or leaving one's house, first thing in the morning and in the afternoon, on being afflicted by distress, anxiety or misfortune, when burdened by debt or poverty, upon entering a graveyard, when stopping for a rest or setting up camp, and in many other situations.

Relations with people - general

Concerning a person's relationship with others, the Qur'an promotes behaviour which strengthens and reinforces social relationships such as the importance given to the role of the family. Treating parents kindly, maintaining good relations with other family members, seeing to the rights and needs of spouses and children and dealing with them with love and mercy, and supporting orphans and the weaker members of society are all obligatory. Conversely, disobeying parents, severing family ties, neglect or abuse of spouses and children, and social isolation are all prohibited.

In addition, the Qur'an instructs that all people should be treated with high moral behaviour and noble manners. One is encouraged to smile, forgive, return harm with good, and have

patience when dealing with other Muslims. Since this high code of moral behaviour is quite trying, Allah has promised immense reward for the one that achieves this.

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) instructed people to adopt good manners when in gatherings, such as not raising one's voice, respecting elders, being gentle with youngsters, greeting those present by saying, "*Assalâmu alaykum wa rahmatuallâh wa barakâtuhu*," which means 'may the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you'. Islam also demands that we guard our tongues against saying negative things about others, even if what we wanted to say was true.

Islam also enjoins that agreements and contracts must be fulfilled, entrusted items returned, and rulers obeyed. It enjoins noble characteristics just as it forbids vileness, baseness, crime, oppression, hostility, aggression, and all other blameworthy and reprehensible qualities.

Relations with parents

Islam highly recommends kindness to parents. This command is mentioned eight times in the Qur'an. In one of the verses, Allah said to Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him):

{And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be dutiful to your parents. If one or both of them

become old, do not say to them a word of disrespect nor shout at them, but address them in terms of honour. And be highly submissive out of mercy, and pray for them saying: My Lord, bestow on them your mercy as they brought me up when I was a child.} (*Qur'an 17: 23-24*)

<<A man asked Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him): Whom should I honour most?

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) replied: Your mother.

Then the man questioned: And who comes next?

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) answered: Your mother.

Then the man inquired again: And who comes next?

The Prophet responded: Your mother.

Then the man queried again: And who comes next?

The Prophet replied: Your father.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

Relations with relatives

Kindness towards relatives has been promoted by most major religions. Islam, however, takes this aspect to a new dimension. Relatives have specific rights laid out by the *Sharia* (Islamic law). We are obliged to assist our relatives by economic as well as social means. The rights of relatives are based on nearness in blood relationship. This can be seen mostly in the rights of inheritors, which are specifically laid out

in the Qur'an. The Qur'an goes a step further, even assigning rights to foster relations. A Muslim is not allowed to make a bequest that excludes any of his or her relatives who have been given a share in the inheritance. Furthermore, even the amount of charity one can assign has been limited; the rights of the relatives must be fulfilled first.

A Muslim must treat all relatives with utmost respect and kindness, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims. A Muslim is not allowed to boycott his or her relatives or cut off relations with them. Muslims are encouraged to keep in contact with them even if these relatives abandon one. Indeed, maintaining family ties is of such great importance that a Muslim is greatly rewarded for doing any good actions that promote this.

Relations with neighbours

Islam encourages treating neighbours very kindly. There is a verse in the Qur'an that sums this all up:

{...[Show] kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is related [to you] and the neighbour who is not related, and the fellow-traveller and the wayfarer...} (*Qur'an* 4: 36)³

³ The translation of the meaning of this verse was taken from *The Glorious Qur'an*, translated (meanings rendered) by Muhammad M.

Also, the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said:
<<(The Angel) Gabriel continued to urge me to treat neighbours kindly and politely, so much that I thought he would order me to make them my heirs.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) also said:
<<Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbour, and anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain guests generously, and anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should say what is good or keep quiet.>> (Bukhari and Muslim)

One of the Prophet's neighbours used to throw trash on him regularly, as he passed by. Once, when she did not do this, he inquired about her, concerned that something was wrong. He found her ill in bed, and when she thought he would display anger or vengeance, she was surprised to find him merciful, despite her rude behaviour towards him. She then embraced Islam because of his kindness. Remember, kindness to neighbours is rewarded by Allah.

Food - Moral conduct

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) taught many practical good manners, including the virtue of adopting the correct manners for eating and drinking. These include eating with one's right hand and not finding fault with the food

but rather being satisfied with it. If you like the food, you should eat it, but if you have no appetite for it, you should leave it in the dish without criticizing it. This is both out of respect for the blessing of the food and in order to avoid hurting the feelings of the person who has cooked it or offered it. It is also preferred for us to eat with others and not alone, either by eating with family or by inviting a poor person to eat with us. '*Bismillâh*' (with the name of Allah I start) is said before beginning to eat, and '*Alhamdulillâh*' (all praise belongs to Allah) is said after the meal, in order that people remember the blessing they have been given and the One who provided it. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) also prohibited people from blowing on food or drink or breathing onto it, out of respect for others who may be sharing it and to avoid the spread of contagious diseases.

Hygiene - Islamic moral conduct

Islam also enjoins both physical and spiritual cleanliness. It encourages that we keep our bodies clean, along with our clothes and our shoes. Islam has guided Muslims for their well-being, down to the minute details. For example, a Muslim is encouraged to wash thoroughly after using the toilet, clean the teeth often (especially with the *siwâk*, or toothbrush), and shower after sexual relations.

Spiritual - Islamic moral conduct

Concerning spiritual purity, the Qur'an instructs that the soul should be straightened and corrected and that the heart should be purified from spite, malice, jealousy, pride and inequity. It calls for integrity of heart and love, affection and humility towards people. It instructs that the tongue should be purified from lying, backbiting, slander, and insult. It should then be replaced with truthfulness and softness in speech. Islam encourages unity, so much so that a Muslim is encouraged to give as many excuses as he or she could for suspected bad behaviour or speech on the part of his or her fellow Muslims. Also, the wealth, property, and life of a Muslim are held sacred: this means that no one else has the right to interfere with these without the Muslim's express permission. The enormity of sins such as slander and backbiting is emphasized in many verses of the Qur'an, and a chapter of the Qur'an (chapter 104) is dedicated to this very subject.

We should restrain our eyes from looking at that to which they are not entitled (such as the private parts of others), and we should keep our ears from listening to loose and immoral talk, including lewd lyrics.

The Qur'an praises and encourages knowledge and criticizes ignorance, saying that it leads to destruction. It commands people to action and dynamism while prohibiting wasteful talk and laziness.

Family structure and rights

It also orders that children should be born within a legal marriage and that sexual desire should be controlled and contained within these parameters.

To uphold the family structure and the well-being of society, the Qur'an prohibits fornication because it is one of the worst assaults on a person's honour and dignity. It is something which causes disease and produces children who are looked upon by society as 'illegitimate'. Likewise, the Qur'an forbids everything which leads to fornication, so it prohibits looking at pornographic pictures and being alone with women who are not close relatives.⁴ It also commands that men should lower their gaze from looking or staring at women whom they have no right to look at. Muslim women thus enjoy protection and security and can be confident that a Muslim man will not even look at her if not permitted to. The same prohibitions hold for women gazing at men unlawfully.

Decency and veiling

With this same reasoning, Islam enjoins morality in behaviour and appearance. Fashions that reduce women to sex

⁴ Close relatives are men's mothers, daughters, sisters, nieces, and wives.

objects are not acceptable. Islamic veiling is a means of protection from unwanted external attention. Allah says in the Qur'an:

{O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused...} (*Qur'an 33: 59*)

That means, women may wear whatever they wish in the privacy of their own homes and in the presence of their husbands, where they will receive only the type of attention they desire.

The rights of the wife

Islam urges men to be kind to their wives. Allah says in the Qur'an:

{... He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...} (*Qur'an 30: 21*)

Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<The best of you are those who are kindest to their wives.>>
(Recorded by Ibn Mâjah with a sound chain of narration)

This is because one can be kind in public where everyone is watching, yet be mean and cruel at home. Islam holds

Muslims accountable even in this situation, where their true nature may be revealed. This is the true test of moral behaviour.

In Islam, the wife retains her independent legal status and family name. She is not the property of her husband in any way, but she has many rights due to her from him, as he does from her.

In Islam, it is the husband's obligation to give his wife a valuable gift at the time of marriage. The groom must present the bride with a marriage dowry. The bride retains her dowry even if she is later divorced. The wife is never obliged to act as a co-provider for the family unless she herself voluntarily chooses to do so. It is the husband's sole responsibility to support his family financially. Islam gives women (whether married, divorced or single) the right to inherit, own and trade.

Polygyny

Polygyny (having more than one wife) is permitted in Islam as a solution to social problems. It addresses the problem of orphans and widows in society. It is also a solution which promotes honesty and matrimonial trustworthiness (especially within the family) for those who have a desire or need for more than one sexual partner, instead of having one wife and taking mistresses. Thus, instead of having an extramarital affair, Islam requires the man to take responsibility for his actions. Islam

limits polygyny to a maximum of four wives at one time. However, it requires the husband to maintain absolute equality in his treatment of his wives, caring for each financially and emotionally in the exact same manner. It should be noted that if a woman is unhappy in this situation, and she fears that she will be unable to fulfil her responsibilities to her husband as well as to Allah, she could opt out of the marriage. A man is not allowed to force her to remain married.

Divorce rules

Islam is a religion of moderation. Although divorce is allowed when necessary, family unity is encouraged. For example, in the event of a divorce, the two spouses are encouraged to bring arbitrators from their family members to help reconcile them. Islam discourages divorce, yet recognizes the rights of both partners to end their matrimonial relationship if circumstances dictate it. Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) said:

<<A believing man should not hate a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her traits he will be pleased with another.>>
(Recorded by Muslim)

Therefore Islam is realistic about the option of divorce, yet also encourages solutions to hold the marriage together.

It is clear that women in Islam are honoured for their roles as mothers. Islam acknowledges that a woman sacrifices her life

for her children, and thus, she is given an honour above that of the father.

Protection of life

The Qur'an also calls for the protection and sanctity of human life and specifically mentions that the taking of an innocent life is one of the worst and most hideous crimes. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) forbade breaking the bones of a dead person, so what about the taking of an innocent life? The Qur'an prescribes 'a life for a life' and 'an eye for an eye' for all injuries, however large or small, unless the family of the person killed or the injured person accepts financial compensation instead.

Protection of property

The Qur'an commands that a person's property and wealth should be safe and inviolable and therefore, it prohibits theft, bribery, usury and deception. It calls for moderation in spending and hence, forbids extravagance, lavishness and the squandering of money while at the same time forbidding the hoarding and amassing of wealth. It calls for balance, and commands that people should neither be greedy, stingy and covetous nor extravagant and wasteful. It encourages people to seek their means of livelihood and their provision in lawful ways such as buying, selling and renting (activities that bring

financial or material benefit to all parties concerned). As mentioned, Islam also safeguards the rights and needs of the poor, especially those who are relatives or in one's own community, so that they do not have to go elsewhere to seek help.

Maintaining health

Islam promotes the protection of good health and has therefore commanded that only wholesome and nutritious food be eaten, and eaten in moderation. It has prohibited the consumption of all harmful food and drink such as pork, carrion, tobacco, alcohol and other intoxicants (mind-altering substances), and so forth. It also prescribes fasting, which has many benefits for the body, especially the digestive system.

Animal rights

The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) commanded for animals to be treated fairly and with kindness, instructing that they should be fed and watered. He promised that such actions would be rewarded on the Day of Resurrection. He also instructed that they should not be made to carry a burden more than they could bear, nor tormented or caused undue suffering or killed unless they were harmful. If an animal is to be slaughtered as food then it should not be slaughtered in front of other animals. This is to avoid making the animal suffer.

Rights of the deceased

Islam maintains respect for the person even after death. When a Muslim dies, he or she must be buried according to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him). The body of the person is washed and perfumed. Then it is wrapped in two pieces of white cloth and the body is buried facing the *Kaaba*.

We are advised to hold the deceased's body gently to ensure that its bones do not break. Before and after the burial, people are encouraged to pray that Allah forgive the deceased and admit him or her into paradise. Islam prohibits sitting on or walking over the grave, in another sign of respect for the dead.

Features of Islamic Teachings

Allah has made the message of Islam easy to understand and to follow. He annulled some previously prescribed rites and practices while affirming others according to His wisdom. As a result, the Islamic creed and law suit peoples' spiritual, psychological, social and economical needs, for all of humankind and for all eras.

Islamic teachings have the following unique features:

1. Rationality

One should not have to derive the truth from a series of complicated logical proofs, only to arrive at something he or she is unsure of (as is common in other religions or philosophies). When the truth is found, it should be clear and obvious. The truth is so simple that anyone is capable of seeing it, and this is the most compelling feature of Islam.

2. Perfection

Since Allah is perfect, His teachings must also be perfect and free from any contradiction or error. The Qur'an challenges its readers to find any errors in it, if they do not believe it is really from Allah:

{Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.} (*Qur'an* 4: 82)

Dr. Maurice Bucaille, a French Christian physician, found many scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an that were not known by humans at the time that the verses of the Qur'an were being conveyed by Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) to those around him. Bucaille wrote, "I could not find a single error in the Qur'an."⁵

3. Clarity

Allah is the Most Compassionate. He therefore guides people through clear and simple revelation free of myths, superstitions and mysteries.

4. Scientific validity and accuracy

It is not surprising to find in the Qur'an and statements of Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) information which has only recently been discovered by modern science. This indicates that the Qur'an is the word of Allah and that Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him) is His Prophet. On the other hand, the religious views which the church presented concerning God, the Bible, and the individual's relation to God forced people into an unfortunate choice: either science or God. Most educated people have come to the conclusion that one cannot be a scientist or an educated

⁵ Bucaille, *The Qur'an and Modern Science*.

person and be a true Christian at the same time. Many philosophers, scientists and the majority of lay people lost hope of reconciling religion and science; thus the ideology of secularism was developed. This dichotomy would not have arisen if the original Gospel which was revealed to Jesus (blessings and peace be upon him) had not been distorted. Islam, the pure religion, raises no contradiction whatsoever between religion and science. This is naturally obvious because both religion and true scientific knowledge are from the same source: Allah, who does not contradict Himself.⁶

5. Prophetic fulfilment

Many of the events prophesied in the Qur'an and in the Prophet's statements have come to pass. This is further proof that Islam is not a man-made religion because it is unimaginable for an uneducated man who was living isolated from other civilizations to make up such prophecies.

6. Moderation

In Islam, there is no conflict between spiritual and worldly life. Rather, it provides a balance between all aspects of human life, taking into account the needs and wants of individuals and

⁶ For more information on the many scientific facts that are referenced in the Qur'an, see *The Qur'an and Modern Science* by Dr. Maurice Bucaille and *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam*, by I. A. Ibrahim, also available at www.islam-guide.com.

society. Therefore, secularism, materialism, monasticism and extreme asceticism are all rejected in Islam, which provides a middle way to achieve harmony and balance between the spiritual and material needs of people. This is why Allah has called the Muslim nation in the Qur'an as a:

{...just community [moderate nation]...} (*Qur'an 2: 143*)

7. Comprehensiveness

Islamic teachings provide people with definite guidelines to follow in all aspects of life: spiritual, individual, social, moral, political, economical, and so on.

8. Uniqueness

For anyone who claimed that Islam was man-made, Allah challenges them to:

{...produce a chapter the like thereof...} (*Qur'an 2: 23*)

Indeed, the entire Qur'an - its language, its elegance, its miraculous nature - is unparalleled. The ancient non-Muslim Arabs tried to construct a verse yet failed, even though their language and poetry was very highly developed in that era. Even many recent non-Muslim scholars admit that the Qur'an is one of the greatest books known to humankind. This point ultimately leads to the fact that Muhammad (blessings and

peace be upon him) - the illiterate - was a true prophet to whom the Qur'an was revealed.

9. Justice

All of humankind descended from one man and one woman (Adam and Eve). Islam teaches that the criterion by which each human being is judged is righteousness, not the colour of one's skin or one's status in society. The best person in the view of Allah is the most righteous. A verse of the Glorious Qur'an reads:

{...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you...} (*Qur'an 49: 13*)

Conclusion

The aspects of Islamic moral system as well as its basic characteristics are amazing. This is because, as we said in the introduction of this book, it is based on the revealed teachings. These teachings have not been discovered by humans.

Volumes of books have been authored on this subject. As an author, I hope I have given the reader some insight into this, which might enable them to read more and more about this great religion.

May the light of truth shine in our minds and in our hearts. May it lead us to peace and certitude in this life and eternal bliss in the hereafter.

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Appendix

For Further Information about Islam

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Online information about Islam

You may also wish to visit the following web sites for up-to-date information and a wealth of reading material:

www.islamfortoday.com

www.islam-guide.com

www.islamonline.net

www.islamtomorrow.com

www.missionislam.com

Online bookstores

www.al-hidaayah.co.uk

www.dar-us-salam.com

www.iiphonline.com

www.soundvision.com

Glossary of Islamic Terms*

<i>Da'wah</i>	دعوة	disseminating the teachings of Islam and calling people to accept and embrace Islam
<i>Hajj</i>	حج	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Kaaba at Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his or her lifetime
<i>Sharia (shari'ah)</i>	شريعة	Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and the statements and actions of the Prophet.
<i>siwâk (or miswâk)</i>	سواك	a small twig (<i>usu.</i> of the <i>arâk</i> tree) used as a natural toothbrush

* The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.